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ABSTRACT

A review of research studied the provision of vocational education and training (VET) in adult and juvenile correctional institutions. Research data and secondary source articles on VET from 1990 to the present were collected from around Australia and, where relevant to the Australian experience, overseas. Findings showed corrections institutions in Australia were moving toward competency-based standards in curriculum, program pathway, and credit transfer opportunities and registration of providers to maximize the VET opportunities for prisoners. Variables affecting prisoner participation in programs were personal goals, to keep busy and cope better, and to improve employment prospects. Several American and Canadian studies found VET led to reduced recidivism; others indicated literacy and numeracy education lowered recidivism. Some small studies in Australia showed VET improved access to employment and lower recidivism, but few studies identified how VET assisted since many variables affect their participation. Recommendations for VET program development more intensive and extensive program evaluation, post-release prisoner followup to identify VET program impact, a more holistic approach toward prisoner education, further development of flexible learning materials, and a national journal of good practice or a website. (Appendixes contain 55 references; list of 102 reviewed articles by category; an article on VET developments in 4 states and the Northern Territory; and some informing principles for VET program development.) (YLB)

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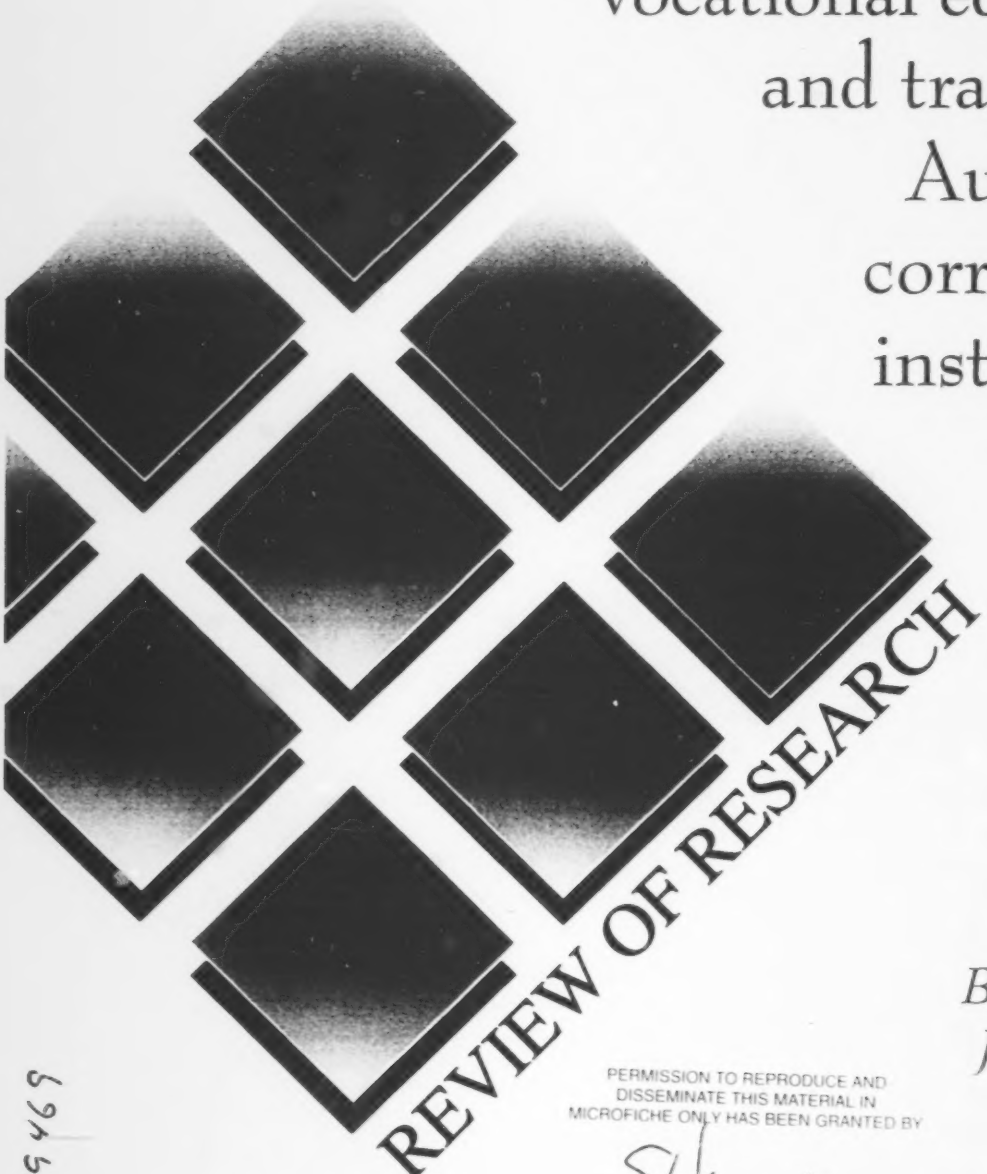
# Vocational education and training in Australian correctional institutions

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# Executive summary

## Purpose of study

THIS REVIEW IS a study of the provision of vocational education and training (VET) in adult and juvenile correctional institutions. The focus is on Australian research since 1990 and on overseas research, where appropriate and relevant to the Australian context. The review aimed to identify and explain the major issues revealed by the literature. Gaps in research will also be identified as well as areas requiring further research.

## Potential of VET

Several studies identify the potential of VET programs. American and Canadian studies found that vocational education leads to reduced recidivism, while others indicate that pre-vocational education (literacy and numeracy education) lower recidivism.

Research on VET programs in Australia has generally taken place on a much smaller scale than in the United States and Canada, and the research has tended to be qualitative rather than quantitative.

A theme reflected in some small studies in Australia is that VET does improve access to employment, and lower recidivism, but few studies identify *how* VET assists as there are many variables which affect why prisoners participate in programs, how they respond, the style of training and the support networks available.

## Recommendations for VET program development

- There should be more intensive and extensive on-going and follow-up evaluation of programs to establish the effects of VET in correctional institutions on all participants–providers, clients, and correctional staff.

- A longitudinal study of prisoners post-release is needed to provide evidence of what impacts current VET programs have had on client outcome.
- A more holistic approach should be developed toward the education of prisoners. This should involve an integrated and personalised program that includes not only vocational skills to increase the clients' employment prospects, but a range of skills to increase job-keeping skills and participation in society generally.
- There should be further development of flexible learning materials for use in prisons, including online learning programs.
- A national journal of good practice and/or website should be established to share and stimulate ideas amongst prisoner educators and to provide a link for many teachers who work in isolated situations.

## Recommendations for VET policy

- Build evaluation into current and future VET program budgets.
- Develop a database so that longitudinal evaluation studies can be conducted.
- Develop further the flexible mode of VET delivery.
- Integrate further the VET personal development and tertiary education programs.
- Support a commitment to interdisciplinary professional development.
- Develop a national database of best practice in VET in correctional settings.

The report concludes with comments on the importance of engaging the support of correctional administrators in implementing the above policy and program recommendations, especially improved program delivery and evaluation.

# Context

THIS REVIEW OF research studies the provision of vocational education in adult and juvenile correctional institutions. By focussing on Australian research since 1990 and on overseas research where appropriate and relevant to the Australian context, this review identifies and explains the major issues revealed by the literature. Gaps in research are identified, as well as areas requiring further research.

It is intended that this review of literature be relevant and useful to a range of audiences - policy makers, legislators, correctional administrators, educators, funding bodies, and various groups either within the criminal justice system or with a close interest in correctional program outcomes. While most of the available data has been submitted from Victorian sources, the recommendations have relevance to all Australian jurisdictions.

Since Martinson (1974) greatly offended the rehabilitationists with his 'nothing works' manifesto, there have been many attempts to show that he was misinformed, misguided, and misleading in his interpretation of research reports. Despite the fact that he subsequently acknowledged the error of his ways, he is still seen as the instigator of a perceived erosion of confidence by correctional administrators in rehabilitative programs.

Over the past decade in Australia the major focus of rehabilitative effort has been on the development of excellent vocational training programs which are modularised, co-ordinated and industry-accredited. In Victoria, for example, the impetus for change and improvement was clearly established when the *Ministerial review of educational services to the disabled* (1984) contained a recommendation that technical and further education (TAFE) colleges 'assume full responsibility for education centres in prisons' (Rec 4.7.2). Action on this recommendation was to see prisoner education taken out of the schools division, special education section in 1989, and placed into the vocationally oriented community colleges for post-school-age students, called TAFE.

The Victorian TAFE recommendation came in the context of government policies at both State and Commonwealth level for increased access to education and training for disadvantaged groups. Following Dawkins' *Skills For Australia* (1987), which

placed strong emphasis on access to vocational training for economic adjustment, various programs were established to facilitate training and re-training for labour market opportunities, including considerations of possible implications for prison education. In 1988 the State Training Board commissioned the author to undertake a study of vocational training in Victorian prisons (Semmens 1988). The report detailed how links could be established between prison education centres, prison industries, and local TAFE colleges so that prisoners could combine on-the-job and off-the-job credit towards community recognised vocational qualifications. At the same time, a consultative committee was established, consisting of representatives of the State Training Board, the Office of Corrections, and the Technical Teachers' Union to work out co-ordination arrangements.

The outcome was the establishment of Corrections as an industry within the State Training Board. This industry facilitated training funds through TAFE colleges to prisons in the same way as funds would be provided to colleges for training in any other industry, such as building construction or hospitality. Associated with this development was the re-constitution of prison education centres as campuses of an identified TAFE college. The Corrections Industry Training Board was officially constituted within the State Training Board in 1991 and since then it has produced an annual Corrections Industry Training Plan which sets out goals, program priorities and resource requirements for the next year as well as reporting on its achievements in the preceding year.

At the same time there was increased interest in correctional education in other States as well, most notably in Queensland where the Byrne report (1990) strongly criticised the range and quality of education programs in Queensland prisons. While the criticism of inadequate resources and access was general, special mention was made of the need for the establishment of task forces to develop appropriate programs for Aboriginal prisoners, women, and juveniles. There have been substantial improvements in education and work programs in Queensland prisons since 1990. These improvements have been part of an overall up-grading of out-dated facilities in that State and additional impetus has been derived from a number of other reports and conferences on the subject of education and training in corrections.

In 1991, the (Commonwealth) Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training conducted an Inquiry into Adult and Community Education. Its report, *Come In Cinderella*, observed that:

> *of all the disadvantaged people who face barriers to their participation in further education and training, those in the prison system are among the most neglected (p.113).*

The report supported Byrne's recommendation that all prisoners, not just those in Queensland, be eligible for fee relief and a book allowance from the Commonwealth Government. This recommendation has not yet been acted on.

In 1992 the National Board on Education, Employment and Training (NBEET *commissioned report, no.*17) recommended that the Commonwealth recognise prison time as unemployment time in terms of meeting criteria for inclusion in labour market programs after release. This would mean that ex-prisoners would not have to wait six to twelve months for admission to job training programs for long-term unemployed people. It was argued that most prisoners were long-term unemployed before going to prison and were likely to be long-term unemployed after release if they did not have immediate access to employment programs upon release. It was also recommended that States run properly accredited programs in correctional facilities to increase the chances of prisoners gaining employment upon release, thus reducing the numbers of ex-prisoners needing to move into Commonwealth labour market programs.

Later in 1992, the Commonwealth Department of Employment Education and Training (DEET) commissioned the Australian Institute of Criminology to undertake a national study of pre-release and post-release schemes to ascertain the best features of such programs. The project was funded from the Aboriginal Deaths in Custody budget to implement the findings of the Royal Commission. The report, *Keeping them in and keeping them out* (1992), stressed the need:

> *to improve co-ordination of education and training opportunities across Australia, and to enable pathways which provide continuity between the prison system and the outside world to operate. Until these changes are made, the desired impact of education and training on rates recidivism is unlikely to be realised (p.71).*

The report also recommended that high priority be given to improving prisoner access to education and training, continuity of participation between prisons and from prison to community, improved communication between custodial and education staff, and recognition of the value of peer tutelage, especially for Aboriginal prisoners. While the report indicated support for NBEET's 1992 study recommendation that the Commonwealth increase prisoner access to Commonwealth labour market programs, no specific recommendation was made in this regard.

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However, DEET did call together heads of all State corrections departments, education providers, and three former Aboriginal prisoners to prepare a response to the education and training recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. This two-day conference took place late in 1993 in Canberra and was attended by the former Royal Commissioner, Mr Hal Wootton. While the *Keeping them in, keeping them out* report aimed to address Royal Commission Recommendation 110, which related to best practice, the Canberra conference mainly addressed Recommendation 185:

*That the Department of Employment, Education and Training be responsible for the development of a comprehensive national strategy designed to improve the opportunities for the education of those in custody.*

The conference made similar recommendations to previous reports, emphasising the need for program access, continuity, accreditation, and labour market relevance of credentials. It also stressed the importance of non-award personal development programs and drew attention to the need for culturally appropriate programs, quoting from the World Indigenous Peoples' Conference at Wollongong (1993), which was held at about the same time as the Canberra conference, and issued the following statement, known as the *Coolangatta Statement* (1993), which referred in part to the importance of self-determination in Indigenous education, including the right to:

> *control/govern indigenous education systems; establish schools and other learning facilities that recognise, respect and promote indigenous values, philosophies, and ideologies; develop and implement culturally inclusive curricula; utilise the essential wisdom of indigenous elders in the education process; establish the criterion for educational evaluation and assessment; define and identify standards for the gifted and talented; promote the use of Indigenous languages in education; establish the parameters and ethics within which Indigenous education research should be conducted; design and deliver culturally appropriate and sensitive teacher training; participate in teacher certification and selection; develop criteria for the registration and operation of schools and other learning facilities; and, choose the nature and scope of education without prejudice (Rec. 2.2.4).*

Unfortunately DEET did not act on the recommendations of the Canberra conference and a year later, the Commonwealth House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs was strongly critical of DEET's tardiness as well as the limited nature of the Australian Institute of Criminology study, and called for a comprehensive national study of the education and training needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in custody, in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, not just prison administrators (*Justice Under Scrutiny*, paras 9.39 - 9.47). The proposed study has not yet been undertaken although some Aboriginal liaison positions were created in DEET to support Aboriginal prisoner transition to community. The positions have never been advertised.

However, there have been some other, more positive, developments. Firstly, in 1995, the Commonwealth Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee established an inquiry into education and training in correctional facilities. Submissions were received from around Australia and interviews were conducted in many places, including prisons. Secondly, during the course of the year, DEET extended its labour market program eligibility to prisoners during the pre-release phase of their sentence. Certain conditions applied but nevertheless this was a substantial breakthrough which

acknowledged the recommendations of reports and representations from State governments over recent years.

The final Senate Inquiry report was published in April 1996. It recommended that the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) establish a secretariat to co-ordinate and monitor the implementation of a national strategy for offenders until the year 2000 (Rec 5c), and that ANTA fund the National Centre for Vocational Education Research to develop a database in corrections education (Rec 9b). Additionally, the Senate report recommended that the Australian Institute of Criminology develop a draft set of national standards for education and training of people in custody (Rec 4), and that the National Corrective Services Administrators' Conference establish a schedule of annual conferences of correctional educators (Rec 32b).

The above recommendations characterise the report. In various areas of concern the report proposes solutions through utilising or extending existing agencies and resources, even including contributions from prisoners in defining their education and training needs (Rec. 1), and proposing that education and training of offenders be included in the accountability and performance requirements of prison managers (Rec 3). The co-ordination of existing agencies and resources theme also extends to the post-release period:

> *The Committee recommends that each State and Territory, with support from the relevant Commonwealth agencies (Commonwealth Employment Service, Department of Social Security etc), develop a 'through-care' strategy for offender management which extends into the post-release period, and which is predicated on the co-operation of, and co-ordination between, the corrections, education, welfare and offender-support agencies beyond the prison gate (Rec 26).*

There is still a long way to go before any of the Senate Inquiry recommendations are implemented. It is now up to the various groups who contributed to the Inquiry to develop priorities, and collaborative strategies for convincing governments and agencies to implement key recommendations. So far, the Inquiry has been the means of bringing together changes for the better over the last decade and focussing attention on what is possible over the next few years. For example, source material for the establishment of standards for education and training provision has been collected and circulated by IFEPS and some of that material is included as Appendix 4 in this report. Further progress on the issue of standards will be reported to the next IFEPS conference in Perth in November 1999.

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This review of research provides another opportunity to take stock of where we are, where we have come from over the last decade, and what is possible over the next few years in terms of direction and programs that provide optimistic evidence that we will make at least as much progress in the next decade as we did in the last.

# Programs with potential

## Methodology

RESEARCH DATA AND secondary source articles on vocational education and training were collected from around Australia and overseas, covering the period from 1990 to the present. Each piece was analysed according to its validity, its program detail, and the type of client for whom the program was designed. A summary sheet was developed to record these data. Under 'Validity', were recorded: year of publication, country of origin, expected outcomes, relevance to Australia, and whether an independent evaluation of the program was carried out. Under 'Program', both content and context were recorded. 'Content' includes: aims, type of skills developed by the program, whether the program was delivered in modular form, whether previous training was required, and specific details of curriculum. 'Context' includes program costs, and whether there were actual links between the program and outside training or work. Under 'Type of Client' were recorded: male/female, adult/juvenile, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, previous employment, length of sentence, recidivist/clean skin, and level of security (maximum/ medium/minimum).



It was not expected that all literature reviewed would attract comments in all the categories listed, but the fewer categories that could be completed on the summary sheet, the more likely a decision that there was insufficient information in the article for it to be included in the literature review. Many articles gave anecdotal information and offered no evaluation of the programs delivered, so most of these articles and reports were discounted from the review.

| Category | Number of articles in category |
|---|---|
| Indigenous Issues | 8 |
| Youth | 6 |
| Women | 6 |
| Disabilities | 1 |
| Recidivism | 9 |
| Policy | 6 |
| General Program Development | 57 |
| Program Integration | 11 |
| **Total Articles** | **104** |

Articles which contained most detail and were independently evaluated were considered of greatest relevance to the task of this project. Unfortunately there were very few articles which qualified. However, others have been included in the report where they contain potentially useful ideas that may be worth developing further by local VET providers. The articles included in the report are summarised on the accompanying chart (Appendix 1) which shows, on the basis of the limited evidence available, what works best with whom.

Our search for reliable and valid information about VET programs for those in correctional institutions covered a wide range of sources including: the world wide web, the Victorian State Government Resource Libraries, the Victorian Corrections Education Management Consortium library, the Australian Institute of Criminology, CINCH, Criminal Justice Abstracts, NCJRS, ERIC database, Centres of the International Forum on Education in Penal Systems, the International Correctional Education Association database and journals, the Canadian Government's Correctional Research publications, the European Prison Educator's Association publications, and the US Department of Justice Research publications.

# Evaluated programs

Recidivism and Open Learning Education (ROLE) Project (Judd, 1998).

This was the only program assessed as relevant to Australia that had undergone independent evaluation.

The ROLE project was established as a pilot program in South Australia in 1996. Funded by the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA) within the context of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (NAEP), it embraces the recommendations for the training needs of offenders set out by the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

The project involved the development of culturally appropriate course materials which were distributed to Aboriginal students in custody. The material is pre-vocational in that its emphasis is on literacy and numeracy, and developing confidence in learning so that students may progress onto further programs in the future.

Judd's evaluation found that the program was successful to the extent that it enhanced students' confidence to take up literacy and numeracy education. However, Judd was unable to make an assessment of measurable learning outcomes because of the limited data recorded in this area. The main value of the course was that it reinforced students' Aboriginality through the art themes used in the materials. Problems with the program were lack of tutorial assistance which resulted in diminished self-confidence for participants, and increased tension between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal inmates when access to ROLE materials was seen by non-Aboriginal inmates as preferential treatment for Aboriginal inmates (Judd, 1998).

# Innovative programs

Although not evaluated, the following notes are included about VET programs that involve innovative ideas:

*Acheron* (Pardew, 1998)

Acheron is a youth training camp-style facility that accommodates males aged between 18 and 20. It is managed by the Melbourne Juvenile Justice Centre. At Acheron, teachers work alongside youth officers from the Department of Human Services as the students participate in horticulture, building and general education activities at the worksite. Teachers assist in the planning and implementation of the actual work projects to optimise the skill acquisition the young men can achieve in their workplace activities. The model allows the completion of a Certificate II in Outdoor Works which is nationally accredited, portable and provides opportunities for further training or vocational pathways. It seems that a crucial factor in Acheron's claimed success for program participants is the cooperation between the education staff and the custodial staff.

*In House Music* (Brooker, 1995)

This program involves 10 - 20 year old youths from Victoria's two Juvenile Justice Centres, Malmsbury and Parkville. It involves a range of projects including an anti-violence marketing project, guitar making, and the production of a CD. It encourages students to develop skills in: graphic design, silk screening, event management, marketing, woodwork and electronics, and allows the opportunity for work experience in the music industry. The program is a vehicle for personal growth and for the development of literacy and numeracy skills and there is the opportunity to achieve a Certificate in Basic Music Industry Skills (BMIS).

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The program is primarily funded by Victoria's Health and Community Services' Department, auspiced via AUSMUSIC (Australian Contemporary Music Development Company). It costs $45,000 a year.

Community links and community access are important components of many programs for youth. Being able to participate in programs in the community is particularly important for young women in custody who attract relatively small amounts of funding because of low numbers and whose "in-house options" are restricted by comparison to the relatively large number of programs available for young men. (Fitzgerald, 1995)

*Employment Access Program* (EAP) (Jones, 1998; O'Dowd, 1996; Griffiths, 1994; Gould, 1992).

This is a Victorian Government, Department of Human Services program established in 1986 under the supervision of an Interdepartmental Committee

(IDC) of the Victorian Department of Labour and the Victorian Department of Community Services. The pilot phase was independently evaluated by Polk and Semmens in 1987-8. That evaluation recommended that the carefully supervised introduction of 'at risk' young people to employers and the work context had the potential to reduce alienation of clients and thereby reduce conflict with the law. Subsequent regionalisation of the program across Victoria and reports by Gould (1992), Griffiths, (1994), O'Dowd (1996) and Jones (1998), confirm the early optimism of Semmens and Polk, although no thorough and independent evaluation has been carried out on the fully developed program.

*Bridging Employment and Training Program* (BEAT) (Fairman and Wilson, 1995).

TAFE colleges are also beginning to take programs to the workplace to offer opportunities to young unemployed people in environments that are perceived as less threatening than the traditional classroom. An example of such a program is Bridging Education and Training (BEAT) which is run in Melbourne by Kangan Batman TAFE in collaboration with the Salvation Army (Fairman and Wilson, 1995) Participation is voluntary and the program may include work experience, training, building self-confidence and case management. Students can achieve accreditation for their input through the Certificates of General Education for Adults (CGEA). The aim is to encourage disadvantaged youth to have the confidence to re-enter more advanced education and training programs. Unfortunately, funding for this program has recently been terminated.

*The Certificates of General Education for Adults (CGEA)* (Cuniff, 1995)

The CGEA was originally developed in Victoria, and is now being used in prisons in New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia. It has given prison education a workable, accredited, general education pathway. The curriculum involves four streams, Reading and Writing, Oral Communication, Numeracy and Maths, and General Curriculum Options. Each stream is divided into four levels of competency involving a nominal 80 hours of study. The overall aim of the CGEA is to allow students a pathway to vocational education, to work, and to enhanced participation in society and its flexibility allows it to be integrated into themes of interest, for example: parenting courses, Occupational Health and Safety or the theory components of a variety of industry training programs.



The curriculum is practical and popular but again there has been no independent evaluation of the effects on participants in correctional settings.

## Pathways

Corrections institutions throughout Australia are generally moving toward competency-based standards in curriculum, program pathway and credit transfer

opportunities and registration of providers to maximise the VET training opportunities for prisoners. (Felton & Hope, 1994; Dabner, 1995; Noad, 1996)

The Pathways model, which has been operating in Victoria since 1992 (Penaluna 1998) embraces this approach. The model which identifies links between accredited VET programs in various correctional settings (adult and juvenile) and TAFE colleges allows students to move between various institutions without having to repeat work. To date in Victoria, Pathways have been developed in Hospitality, Adult Basic Education, Agriculture/Horticulture, Engineering, Furnishing Studies, Information Technology, and a Pathway has been developed for Koories.

In Victoria an evaluation of progress to date in the implementation of 'training program pathways' into the community, has been undertaken by the key people involved in its development. The evaluation sought to establish the extent to which prisoners have been able to pursue a particular course as they move from one prison to another, from one level of security to another, and from prison to community supervision (Wilson and Penaluna, 1995). In this study 115 prisoners were 'tracked' for three months and some problems identified. Feedback to the prison managers has brought remedial action to internal arrangements for prisoner transfers. However, the major concern arising from the 'tracking' exercise was that, of the 39 prisoners in the sample who were released, only three continued their studies beyond release. This finding is consistent with other VET outcome studies on male and female post-release experience (Semmens 1991; 1996) in which it was found that, despite their best intentions, post-release responsibilities and weak social networks make it very difficult for most prisoners to contemplate further study or training.

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## The integrated approach

Seemingly successful programs occur when there is an integrated approach from educators and prison management. Such is the case at Malmsbury Juvenile Justice Centre.

At Malmsbury there is a move towards unit management where there is greater inmate responsibility for the domestic control of the living units, and increased access to personal files and a supervisory officer. The integration of education and training into this model creates formal and informal learning opportunities for the 17-21 year old men who have been sentenced there, which are additional and complementary to the competencies provided in TAFE modules. The partnership between management and educators establishes a safe context for the expectation that the young men will take individual and small group responsibility of the daily management and programming of the institution (Vines and Bertram, 1995; Henderson, 1998; Semmens, 1998).

## Indigenous issues

There was some information found on specific programs for indigenous people in southern Australia, but no information was found on programs in Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory, where indigenous prisoner numbers tend to be higher (ABS, 1997).

The Victorian Corrections Industry Training Board has attempted to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' access to vocational education in prisons by including in its Industry Training Plan a Koori Pathway, which was initially developed by Kangan TAFE (Nicholls, 1994). The pathway incorporates accredited Koorie specific programs which are offered in some prisons around Victoria. They include: Certificate II in Koori Education Training and Employment (CKETE), and Certificate in Koori Art and Design and a Certificate I in Koori Education (Coorong Tongala) has recently been developed with funding from the Adult, Community and Further Education Board. These courses can be pursued post-release.

Culturally appropriate support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders post-release is particularly important, and the kind of support that ex-prisoners might need also varies enormously (Pitman and Tregambe, 1996). The Mabbyle Largenner program (Mabbyle Largenner means 'keeping out of trouble' in a Tasmanian Aboriginal language) has been established in Tasmania to provide post-release support for Aboriginal offenders (Senate Report, 1996). The program, funded through the Department of Vocational Education and Training (DVET) aims to: provide opportunity for Aboriginal offenders on community service orders, parole or remand, or those due for release, to participate in an education and training program for improvement of skills and confidence and enhancement of employment prospects. The project brings together the services of several Aboriginal agencies and claims rising numbers of referrals. However, no evaluative information was available (Burrows, 1997).



## Inmates' motivations

Why inmates take VET programs should be considered: there are many, varying factors.

The Senate report (1996:9) tells of an educational needs survey, carried out in the Northern Territory, which asked prisoners about the programs that they thought would be in their best interests. The results showed that the majority of prisoners did not request vocational education, but large numbers did request literacy and numeracy programs. The results suggest that assumptions about what prisoners want should be regularly reviewed.

The Senate report (1996:49) suggests that the consultation process is in greater need when it comes to female prisoners. The inquiry found that many women

saw vocational programs as being of little relevance and would prefer courses to do with every day living. One of the submissions to the inquiry suggested that courses in personal hygiene, how to budget on a supporting parent's fund or coping mechanisms for single parents would be useful. However, the literature review found evidence from America to suggest that such courses may reinforce stereotyping. (Winifred, 1996:168, cited in Pitman and Tregambe, 1996; Schram, 1998).

Winifred found that gender-stereotyping can have a detrimental effect on the outcomes of VET programs for women. She says that "without adequate programming, these women return to society older but still without skills and education". Schram (1998) also examined stereotypes pertaining to vocational programming, by comparing the attitudes of four groups: female inmates, peer counsellors, correctional officers and prison program staff. Schram found that female inmates had the most sexist attitudes about women and were unlikely to perceive the need for women to work. This view may also be a result of low self-esteem and a lack of confidence of being able to participate in the workforce. Whatever the reason for this approach, Schram suggests that while it exists, traditional or non-traditional vocational courses will have little appeal to those prisoners consumed by personal issues. Schram suggests that courses in women's studies might be more effective than VET in raising the level of self-worth of many female prisoners.

Other prison program commentators take up the theme of mixed motivation for VET program participation. It appears that not all prisoners attend VET programs to enhance their job opportunities. Mau (1994) found that prisoners attend educational programs for different reasons. Generally, the reasons included personal goals (to build confidence and self-esteem, change attitudes, develop creativity, etc), to keep busy and cope better (relieve boredom, relieve frustration, avoid work, etc), and to improve employment prospects (gain a qualification, improve reading and writing skills, etc). Mau's findings are supported by Pitman and Tregambe (1996) and Halstead and Edwards (1992). Judd's (1998) study also provides evidence that personal development and cultural relevance programs have a motivating effect for participation in literacy and numeracy programs. The same probably applies to participation in other VET programs as well.



While prisoner motivation for VET program participation is a key area for further investigation in program design and evaluation, it is also suggested that institutional barriers can block access and/or progress of VET programs in prisons. Integrating educational programs into a system that focuses on confinement and management is a theme that occurs often (Halstead and Edwards, 1992; Cowie, 1993; Mau, 1994), and Penaluna (1993:21) raises the issue of 'the competition for use of a prisoner's time between industries, education and other activities'.

Additionally, lack of teaching staff/tutors was a problem cited in some reports (Mau, 1994, Senate Report, 1996), especially a lack of Aboriginal teaching staff for Aboriginal programs (Halstead and Edwards, 1992; Judd, 1998). Waiting lists for courses are often an issue (Mau, 1994; MC Media & Assoc. 1998), as was a lack of supplies, equipment and learning resources (Cowie, 1993; Mau, 1994; Senate Report, 1996).

## Recidivism

A constant theme of the overseas literature on education in prisons is recidivism. Many writers and institutions claim that recidivism is a measure of how successful an educational program has been.

There is some controversy over the definition of the term 'recidivism' and in many articles the meaning was not clearly described. Where a definition was given, it covered a releasee who:

- returned to prison (Adams et al, 1994)
- revoked conditional release (eg. 'broke' parole) (Saylor and Gaes, 1996; Schumacker et al, 1990).
- committed a new offence, related or unrelated to past criminal activity (Saylor and Gaes, 1996; Schumacker et al, 1990).

However, the most generally applied definition refers to 'a return to prison' and that definition is applied in this report unless otherwise stated.

The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation (1995) found that participation in VET slightly reduces recidivism within some groups of ex-prisoners. Female offenders who had undertaken vocational education were one third less likely to recidivate than those who had not participated, and recidivism rates for 'serious' offenders were substantially reduced if they participated in education. The study also found that particular courses had more impact with particular groups, for example, Adult Basic Education (ABE) had more of an impact on older prisoners, whereas vocational education was more successful with younger inmates.



Other American and Canadian studies also claimed that vocational education leads to reduced recidivism. Saylor and Gaes' (1994, 1996, 1997) conducted a study of more than 7000 inmates between 1983 and 1987, and reported in 1992 after all the offenders had been released for at least one year. They found that vocational or apprenticeship training can have short-term and long-term effects that reduce recidivism, particularly for men.

Schumacker et al. (1990) studied a group of 760 releasees for 12 months. A data collection tool was designed to take into account information on vocational enrolment and completion, academic background, employment and violation

status. In comparison to a control group, they found that the vocational/ academic groups had the highest employment rates (39% as opposed to 24%) and the lowest criminal activity rates 23% as opposed to 32%). The control group had the highest criminal activity rates. Schumacker et al. claim that even those who had enrolled but not completed vocational courses tended to have higher rates of employment and lower rates of criminal activity than the control group. This suggests that vocational education is associated with lower recidivism rates.

Likewise, Gerber and Fritcsh (1995:119) found positive outcomes for participants in VET. They conducted a review of a number of evaluated studies in America and concluded that:

> *adult academic and vocational programs led to fewer disciplinary violations during incarceration, to reductions in recidivism, to increases in employment opportunities and to increases in participation on release.*

There were also other studies which indicate that pre-vocational education (literacy and numeracy education) leads to reduced recidivism. Adams et al. (1994) studied the effect of prison education programs of more than 14 000 inmates between 1991 and 1992. They found that intensive programs for the most educationally disadvantaged were most effective. And in Canada, Connor and Borrowman (1991) found that Adult Basic Education (ABE) has a positive impact on community adjustment.

Miles Harer (1994: 3-4) found positive outcomes for those who undertook education in prisons. He analysed data collected by the Federal Bureau of Prisons in Washington. He selected a 35% random sample of prisoners who were released within a six month period in 1987 and concluded that:

> *Persons who were full time employed or attended school at least 6 months within 2 years of the time they entered prison had a recidivism rate of 25.6 percent, compared to 60.2 percent for those not engaged. . . Recidivism rates were inversely related to educational program participation while in prison. The more educational programs successfully completed for each six months confined, the lower the recidivism rate. For those inmates successfully completing one or more courses per each 6 months of their prison term, 35.5% recidivated, compared to 44.1% of those who successfully completed no course during their prison term.*



Although not related directly to vocational education, a research study conducted in Canada (Duguid et al, 1998) tested the claim that a university liberal arts course was effective in reducing the rate of recidivism for its students. The project looked at the students who enrolled in the course over a period of twenty years, 1973 - 1993, and found that the program was particularly effective with many high-risk offenders. This suggests that different types of education and/or training may be more appropriate for some prisoners than others and that in the interests of cost-efficiency, ways and means of assessing

suitability for participation and future success could be investigated in Australia. The Duguid study also suggests that educational programs other than VET may be more suitable for some prisoners if recidivism is accepted as the major criterion for program effectiveness.

Research from the United Kingdom did not refer specifically to recidivism, but focussed more generally on the programs offered. Vocational training in correctional facilities in the UK is often delivered by trainers within industry programs who have no connection with education staff. (Waldon, 1996; Flynn and Price, 1995) Recent research studies have focussed on the quality and value of the training offered and their recommendations for the future have included: greater emphasis on provision of inmate training; an emphasis on links to industries outside the prison; and, sentence planning which involves consideration of vocational issues. (Simon and Corbett, 1996)

## Australian programs

Research on VET programs in Australia has generally taken place on a much smaller scale than in the United States and Canada, and the research has tended to be qualitative rather than quantitative.

A theme reflected in some small studies in Australia is that VET does improve access to employment, but few studies identify *how* VET assists. This is probably because the scope of Australian research projects has not generally attempted to encompass the many variables which affect why prisoners participate in programs, how they respond, the style of training and the support networks available (Pitman & Tregambe, 1996).

Semmens (1991) found from a random sample of forty-five prisoners at Barwon prison that personal contacts and lack of previous prison experience appear to have a strong impact on finding jobs and lower recidivism rates in the first six months after release. Mau (1994) also found that Barwon prisoners participating in vocational programs who were keen to work in the future, were realistically focusing on jobs that had been arranged through contacts.



Pitman and Tregambe's (1996) study of 39 male in Victorian prisons found that prisoners can be successful in gaining employment after release but it is not necessarily in the field in which they undertook studies. This matches the findings of Gorta and Panaretos (1990) in New South Wales. Gorta and Panaretos (1990) surveyed 80 parolees who had undertaken VET in prisons. The parolees identified positive effects: learning about skills to obtain work, and the building of confidence and self-esteem. The parolees considered vocational courses useful for bridging the gap between life in prison and life in the community, particularly the courses with work-release programs. Most parolees found work, but the work was mostly unskilled as it had been before entry to

prison, and it was often short-lived, perhaps indicating that the work was not rewarding or there were problems with keeping a job.

Halstead and Edwards (1992: 1) noted that certain groups of prisoners seem to be associated with lower rates of recidivism. The groups included: those with work available on release, those with qualifications, those who participated in work release programs and those with post-release support (Broadhurst, 1992). They noted that these factors are often linked and that it is most likely that in combination, recidivism would be reduced.

# Findings and directions for further research

## VET program development

THERE NEEDS TO be more intensive and extensive on-going and follow-up evaluation of programs to establish the effects of VET in correctional institutions on all participants. A strategy for implementation may be to build in evaluation at the program design stage, allowing feed-back at intervals throughout and on completion of the program. This feedback should not only include responses from students, but also from teachers and those involved in industry so that programs may be continually improved and developed to meet the needs of all involved. An action-research approach would be appropriate as all participants would be involved, feedback immediate, and program improvement on-going.

There needs to be a longitudinal study of prisoners post-release which would provide evidence of what impacts current VET programs have had on participant outcomes. Considering the differences in VET delivery systems between jurisdictions (see Appendix 4), it is appropriate that longitudinal studies should happen at state/territory level, although some agreements about data collection methods and procedures would facilitate national comparisons of program effectiveness.



As recommended in various reports over the last decade (Byrne, 1990; Senate, 1991; NBEET, 1992; AIC, 1992; Coolangatta Statement, 1993; IFEPS, 1994; Senate, 1996; Judd, 1998) those in custody need to have access to community accredited courses. As with VET students in the community, prisoners should have the option of studying by flexible delivery, online (under supervision), or through more traditional methods. Within reasonable security constraints, prisoners need to be able to make a choice about which mode of delivery suits their learning style and their needs.

Further, an integrated, more holistic, approach needs to be developed toward the education of prisoners. At present there are many programs operating within correctional settings: pre-vocational and vocational programs, personal development programs (such as anger management, assertiveness training),

drug rehabilitation programs, pre-release programs, parenting programs, external study programs. In reality, such issues don't occur in isolation from each other, and so in developing the skills to cope with life post-release we should offer prisoners a integrated and personalised program that includes not only vocational skills to increase the clients' employment prospects, but a range of skills to provide continuity between the prison system and the outside world, and to increase participation in society.

Increased participation between the professionals that impact on a prisoner's development would need to be the basis of an integrated approach and professional development for custodial as well as education staff would need to be offered so that this may happen.

A national journal of (evaluated) good practice and a website could be established to share and stimulate ideas amongst prisoner educators and to provide a link for many teachers who work in isolated situations.

## VET policy

Recommendations:

- Build evaluation into current and future VET program budgets.
- Develop a database so that longitudinal evaluation studies can be conducted.
- Develop further the flexible mode of VET delivery.
- Integrate further the VET, personal development, and tertiary education programs.
- Support a commitment to interdisciplinary professional development.
- Develop a national database of best practice in VET in correctional settings.



## Implications for correctional administrators

Program evaluation is a co-operative effort so agreements need to be developed about its conduct. The outcome will be strengthened VET provision and higher morale for prisoners and staff.

An important aspect of co-operative effort is support for interdisciplinary professional development so that custodial staff have the opportunity to participate in program evaluation and integrate their skills with other workers in the correctional environment.

Another key aspect of the co-operative effort is support for the development of a national database of best VET practice in correctional settings. Decisions about

what categories of data about correctional settings that may be included in the database will impact on the comprehensiveness of evaluation reports.

## Further research

Generally, the literature review found a lack of detailed program analysis in Australia and overseas. Without thorough and independent program evaluation we have no sure way of assessing whether programs equip participants with appropriate skills for life after release, whether the mode of delivery is appropriate, whether standards are maintained, whether assessment methods are appropriate, whether programs suit employer needs and whether educators are appropriately equipped with the skills and resources required.

The literature also found a lack of post-release information about prisoners in Australia. Without information about what happens to prisoners after release we have no way of assessing whether educational programs in correctional settings have enduring positive impacts.

There was also a lack of information about vocational education programs for minority groups, particularly for disabled prisoners and for Asian prisoners. Additionally, there were very few details of the costs of programs so no evaluation of VET program cost effectiveness is possible in this review of literature.

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# Appendix 1

## VET developments in four States and the Northern Territory

In South Australia, the Department of Correctional Services has a licence to provide the CGEA because the Department, rather than an external authority, is responsible for education and training of prisoners. From its annual education budget, the Department buys programs from TAFE and other providers. Since taking over the responsibility for education and training provision in 1994, the Department has supported a range of developments, from pre-vocational programs in horticulture, engineering and business studies through to a pre-release labour market program called 'kickstart.' While it is reported (Meatheringham, 1995) that prisoners appreciate the vocational emphasis of programs, they also want increased access to programs which address personal development issues such as anger management, substance abuse, parenting, cognitive skills, life skills and health (Senate Inquiry Report, 1996: 93). There is also an increasing demand for education and training amongst prisoners, which may be an indicator of the quality and perceived relevance of the programs that are currently offered.

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As in South Australia, the co-ordination of prison education in New South Wales is undertaken from within the Department of Corrective Services, but in a different way – by the recently created Adult Education and Vocational Training Institute (AEVTI). All accredited programs are delivered to correctional facilities through AEVTI be it TAFE, DEET, community college or other selected provider. All vocational awards are made on AEVTI letterheads. AEVTI also takes responsibility for portability of training from one prison to another and for awarding recognition of prior learning.

The other significant and different development in NSW prison education is the number of high quality teaching resource packages specially designed for inmates, including some in the basic literacy course, which have been produced by prisoners on topics of interest to themselves and other prisoners learning to read.

In Queensland the education of prisoners is the responsibility of each correctional facility. The Queensland Corrective Services Commission (QCSC)

employs education officers to co-ordinate programs for prisoners at each centre, and each centre has its own budget for determining its own program profile. Within the QCSC there is a Vocational Education and Training Advisory Body (VETAB) which attracts funds from the Queensland Vocational Education, Training and Employment Commission (VETEC) and articulates the training of offenders within the State Training Profile. However, the most pressing need of prisoners is for basic literacy and numeracy and, to this end, a Certificate of Vocational Access has been established this year in conjunction with TAFE and is available in distance mode to all prisons in Queensland. Co-ordination of program participation begins upon admission where a case management plan is prepared for every prisoner with a sentence of at least nine months, or less if special needs are identified. Special programs have also been developed in anger management, substance abuse and cognitive skills to meet expressed needs of prisoners.

Another feature of the Queensland prison system is the development of the Western Outreach Camps (WORC) scheme whereby up to 180 prisoners nearing release can transfer to a work team of about 25 prisoners at one of nine country camps and participate in local projects in consultation with the local community advisory committees and their respective needs for community amenities.

There is also a strong emphasis on development of good work habits in Tasmania where all prisoners are expected to work during the day and attend classes at night if they wish to continue their education or develop hobby skills. In cases where certain classes can only be conducted during the day, prisoners may participate at no cost to their daily pay rate. Despite the small number of prisoners (about 250 spread over six prisons and mostly with short sentences), a wide range of courses is offered from basic education to vocational training and tertiary courses through distance education. Various funding sources from other Tasmanian government departments and from the Commonwealth government are distributed through the prison corrections program co-ordinator in consultation with the Prison Education and Training Steering Committee.



The Northern Territory stands out from the rest of Australia because it has the highest Aboriginal population and a very high proportion of Aboriginal prisoners. There are about 450 prisoners in the Northern Territory and around 75 per cent are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders. More than 80 per cent of Aboriginal prisoners speak languages other than English as their first language. This presents a problem for the NT Department of Correctional Services, because, while it has taken responsibility for education and vocational training, access to modules and courses through the national TAFE network does not meet the special education and training needs of a large proportion of prisoners. Some funds are available from the Commonwealth for Aboriginal programs and there is an Aboriginal steering committee which has responsibility for advising and endorsing Aboriginal program funding allocations.

The issue of providing appropriate and adequate programs for Aboriginal prisoners is reflected to a varying degree in every prison administration in Australia. Insufficient programs, insufficient Aboriginal teachers, cultural differences, not only between Black and White, but also between various language groups, are just some of the problems that need to be addressed in program design and delivery. As one Aboriginal teacher in a New South Wales prison (Byrne, 1995) has written:

> *Aboriginality is about culture, identity, shared experience and world view. It is not about physical traits and stereotypes.*
>
> *Consultation avoids exploitation of Aboriginal people.*
>
> *Consultation recognises Aboriginal people as the authorities on Aboriginal culture.*

Prison administrations, like other government departments, are still struggling to consult and then to provide culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal people, whether those services are education and training, health, welfare, housing or whatever, and whether those services are in prison or in the wider community. Still Aboriginal people die in custody at the same rate as they did prior to the Royal Commision which reported in 1991.

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# Appendix 2

## Some informing principles for VET program development

**1 The Principles Proposed by the International Forum on Education in Penal Systems in its Submission to the Senate Inquiry into Education in Correctional Settings (1996)**

A number of principles are listed here, starting with those most obviously related to the needs of the most marginal groups. However, the list should not be seen as a priority listing because all of the principles need to be implemented if education and training are to increase both employability and law-abiding citizenship.

1 Maximise the number of offenders supervised in the community as an alternative to detention provided that community corrections' facilities are staffed to make connections to education and training courses, and other support networks in the community.

2 Educational and vocational assessment upon admission to a correctional facility. At the same time, the offender should receive information about the nature and purpose of available courses, costs, time commitments, and community support services for course completion, personal and family welfare.



3 Access to literacy and numeracy programs as a right for all offenders.

4 Access to all education and training programs available to the community at large as a right. (This principle assumes that penalties of the court apply to freedom of movement only and do not impinge upon other rights and responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic society).

5 Access to library resources as a right for all offenders whether enrolled in courses or not.

6 Delivery of education and training programs by the same accredited community providers so that the qualifications received have community currency.

7 Provision of non-award cultural, preparatory, and interest classes, by relevant groups, including ex-offenders or peer teacher aides.

8 Priority program development for disadvantaged groups - Aboriginal, youth, women, non-english speaking background, and offenders with disabilities.

9 Recognition of prior learning.

10 Access to all offenders to education and training that leads to employability. Within correctional facilities this requires co-ordination of education, vocational training and industry programs. In community corrections it requires counselling about availability of work experience placements and employment opportunities upon completion of courses.

11 Modularisation of accredited courses across Australia.

12 Education and training 'pathways' for accredited courses within correctional systems and into the post-release period.

13 Extension of education and training 'pathways' into tertiary education.

14 DEET to recognise time in detention as unemployment time so that ex-prisoners have immediate access to labour-market training programs upon release. (Most are currently unemployed prior to detention and are unemployed after release. No waiting would increase the likelihood of connection to a more independent lifestyle after release.)

15 Access to Austudy education and training allowance for fees and books whilst in custody. (Currently, availability of courses does not guarantee access for many prisoners and youth trainees who would enrol if they could afford to do so).

16 Access to training allowances for young offenders in custody who wish to undertake vocational training programs during the community re-integration pre-release phase of their sentence.

17 Access to distance education, especially for tertiary level courses.

18 Program evaluation. This should be a requirement of any changes implemented as a result of the Senate Inquiry. It should include curriculum content and process of delivery as well as program outcomes.

19 Creation of a National Secretariat to co-ordinate consistency of, and access to, courses across Australia, and to act as a clearinghouse for information about best practice within Australia and overseas. This secretariat may also take responsibility for program evaluation.

20 Initial training of custodial officers to include understanding the importance of education and training programs for offender rehabilitation.

21 Custodial staff access to all education and training facilities and programs offered within correctional facilities so that they have the opportunity and encouragement to up-grade their qualifications.

22 Regular in-servicing courses for custodial and CES staff who come into contact with offenders, especially in the areas of cultural understanding and counselling skills.

23 Corrections' departments facilitate stronger contacts with accommodation agencies, crisis networks of support, family support agencies, and post-placement support so that offenders are less likely to be released to nowhere. This may be achieved through pre-release courses that involve a conditional release practicum component. Such pre-release courses could include citizenship awareness training.

**2 The Agreed Principles for Education Provision of the Council of Europe since 1989.**

The Committee of Ministers recommends on prison education that:

1 All prisoners shall have access to education, which is envisaged as consisting of classroom subjects, vocational education, creative and cultural activities, physical education and sports, social education and library facilities;

2 Education for prisoners should be like the education provided for similar age groups in the outside world and the range of learning opportunities should be as wide as possible;

3 Education in prison shall aim to develop the whole person bearing in mind his or her social, economic and cultural context;

4 All those involved in the administration of the prison system and the management of prisons should facilitate and support education as much as possible;

5 Education should also have no less a status than work within the prison regime and prisoners should not lose out financially or otherwise by taking part in education;

6 Every effort should be made to encourage the prisoner to participate actively in all aspects of education;



7 Development programs should be provided to ensure that prison educators appropriate adult education methods;

8 Special attention should be given to those prisoners with particular difficulties and especially those with reading or writing problems;

9 Vocational education should aim at the wider development of the individual, as well as being sensitive to trends in the labour market;

10 Prisoners should have access to a well-stocked library at least once a week;

11 Physical education and sports for prisoners should be emphasised and encouraged;

12 Creative and cultural activities should be given a significant role because these activities have particular potential to enable prisoners to develop and express themselves;

13 Social education should include practical elements that enable the prisoner to manage daily life within the prison, with a view to facilitating the return to society;

14 Wherever possible, prisoners should be allowed to participate in education outside prison;

15 Where education has to take place within the prison, the outside community should be involved as fully as possible;

16 Measures should be taken to enable prisoners to continue their education after release;

17 The funds, equipment and teaching staff needed to enable prisoners to receive appropriate education should be made available.

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This review of research on vocational education and training is one of a series of reports commissioned to guide the development of future national research and evaluation priorities

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